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from him when he has extended his study of the religious tablets of the Kuyunjik Collection and has gained more experience in the copying and editing of Assyrian texts. On behalf of the general reader it may be permitted to express the wish that his future contributions to the subject of Assyrian and Babylonian religion will be made more accessible by means of introductions and fuller explanatory notes.

LEONARD W. KING.

September 15, 1896.

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### KING'S BABYLONIAN MAGIC AND SORCERY.\*

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An encouraging symptom of the advance made in the method of Assyriological publications is to be found in the work done during the past two years by such men as Knudtzon, Tallqvist, King, and Zimmern† in gathering together the cuneiform tablets belonging to a single series or class and in presenting the group in such a form as to enable scholars to undertake a systematic study of the remains of Babylonian literature. Now that Bezold's great catalogue of the Kuyunjik collection of the British Museum is complete, there is no longer any excuse for what might be termed "promiscuous" publications. Such publications are always of doubtful value and particularly so in the domain of Assyriology.

Mr. King's book is a model of what a systematic publication ought to be. He has chosen as the basis of his work a group of tablets well defined by the formula, "The Lifting up of the Hand," found in the colophon. To these he has added, as an appendix, a number of tablets that illustrate the group in question. He begins by an introduction in which he carefully and succinctly sets forth the character of the group, its distinguishing features, the divisions, the method of composition, the traces of editing that they show, and their contents. In five sections, the tablets of the group selected, are furnished to the reader in accurate transliterations and admirable translations, together with explanations and comments, elaborate where needed, brief where possible. The sixth section contains "Prayers against the evils attending an eclipse of the moon" published in the same complete fashion. A complete vocabulary is added and appendixes containing a list of proper names, a list of numerals, portions of words, and ideographs of uncertain readings. The first part of the whole work is brought to a close by several pages of additions and corrections and two indexes, one to tablets and duplicates and the other to the registration numbers of the tablets published. The second part of the work consists of copies of the cuneiform texts, beauti-

\* Leonard W. King—BABYLONIAN MAGIC AND SORCERY, being "The Prayers of the Lifting of the Hand." The cuneiform Texts of a group of Babylonian and Assyrian Incantations and Magical Formulæ, edited with Transliterations, Translations, and Full Vocabulary from Tablets of the Kuyunjik Collections preserved in the British Museum. London: Luzac & Co., 1896. 8vo, xxx+198 pp. and 76 plates.

† To this list the name of J. A. Craig may now be added, who, according to a recent notice in the London *Academy*, is engaged upon the highly important work of preparing for publication the astrological series known as "The Illumination of Bel."

fully transcribed. A glance at these copies is sufficient to inspire confidence, and much handling of the copies only increases and justifies this confidence. In respect to completeness, King's publication compares most favorably with Knudtzon's and Tallqvist's recent works, while it is superior, *e. g.*, to Zimmer's "Šurpu" Series, whose commentary is entirely too scanty, and whose book lacks an introduction in which the results of his study of the series published by him are summed up. Special importance is to be attached to this last feature. It is not too much to say that Knudtzon, Tallqvist, and King have doubled the value of their monographs by the elaborate introductions which they have furnished.

It stands to reason that if a scholar devotes himself specially to some division of the great religious literature of the Babylonians and Assyrians, he is (or ought to be) in a better position than any one else to understand the bearings, the import, and the character of the section that he has worked up. To content himself in such a case with a mere publication or with only a publication and translation is manifestly an injustice both to the public and to himself. If we are to make any real advance in our interpretation of the Babylono-Assyrian culture, each one must contribute his share. A piece of work once done ought to be so done as to make it unnecessary to do it again. If every student is compelled to do the work of all other students over again, Assyriology is doomed to a progress marked by proceeding in a circle. We have had so much of "half-way" publications, of incomplete investigations in the domain of Assyriology, that there is some justification for the recent utterance of Oppert, who went so far as to declare that Assyriologists have not advanced our knowledge beyond the point reached twenty years ago. It is a special pleasure under these circumstances to welcome a work like King's. He has given his labors such a form as to render the study of the tablets published by him palatable and profitable to all Semitic scholars—not merely the cuneiform specialist—and indeed to all interested in the history of ancient religions.

The group of tablets chosen by Mr. King possess some points of unique interest. In the first place, the catch-word of the group "lifting up of the hand" is a most significant term. As King very clearly shows, it can have no other meaning than that of prayer or supplication. It takes its origin from the attitude of the worshiper when approaching the deity, but we may press the point involved in the use of the one "hand" a little further than Mr. King does. In the famous Abu-Habba tablet (V Rawlinson, 60), we have a representation of a worshiper being led into the presence of a deity—the sun-god. The right hand is raised, the other is held by the priest who acts as mediator between the god and the worshiper. Behind the worshiper is a female figure with both hands uplifted, but this, as Dr. Ward has shown,\* is a goddess, not a human being. The raising of the two hands is probably a mark of honor paid

\* *E. g.*, *Seal Cylinders, etc.*, of the *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, pp. 14 and 18. The consort of the sun-god, even when standing at the side of the latter, has her hands raised before her.

by a female deity to her consort. The Abu-Habba tablet furnishes an explanation, also, for the use of the one hand only on the part of the worshiper. The latter—even though he be a king—cannot approach the deity directly. He needs the services of a priest who alone has direct admission into the presence of the deity. The worshiper must be brought to the god by the priest and it would appear that to take hold of the priest's hand symbolizing the mediation was a custom which at one time was *de rigueur* in the Babylonian cult. The custom may not have been strictly observed in later days,\* but the phrase survived, and on pictorial representations, at least, the human worshiper never extends both hands to the deity. The use of the hand is also a point of importance. The god, whether sitting or standing, towers over the worshiper. The latter, seeking communion with his god, expresses his aspiration by the symbolical raising of the hand. It is interesting to note traces of the same custom among the Hebrews. Abraham, when formally declining to take his share of the booty taken in a *razzia*, lifts up his "hand towards the lord Yahwe" by way of emphasizing his intention; and so in a number of other passages the phrase occurs in connection with religious observances.† Later, among the Hebrews both hands were spread out in prayer (*e. g.*, Isa. 65:2)—as perhaps also among the Babylonians. Parallels may also be found among other nations and, no doubt, the various symbolism connected with the hand—the raising of it to bless, or in the oath, the clasping of the hand as a sign of agreement, the laying of the head on some one as a symbol of the transfer of powers and privileges—has, as its starting point, the desire for communion with a higher power, as exemplified by the Babylonian custom.

Coming now to the prayers themselves, an interesting point connected with the group published by King is the manner in which they illustrate the transition among the Babylonians from mere incantations to actual supplications, embodying religious conceptions of a comparatively advanced type. The conservatism attaching to all religious cults of antiquity prevented the Babylonians from ever setting wholly aside the most ancient method of freeing oneself of any evil, whether actual or portending, which consisted in the recitation of formulas endowed with magic power. Remarkable as some of the religious ideas are that we meet with among the Babylonians and which passed from the Babylonians to the Assyrians, no prayer to the gods was considered efficacious without the introduction of some of the old formulas. The sign which was used as a determinative for "incantation" is attached to the prayers, and some of the most sublime invocations of the gods end in phrases that clearly belong to an entirely different level of thought. King's publication brings out clearly this phase of the religious life of the Babylonians. He furnishes prayers to Sin, Ea Damkina Ninib, Ištar, Šamaš Marduk, Nabu, Bel Nergal, Nabu, Bau, Tashmitum, and others. In all, we note

\* Sargon, *e. g.*, uses *ka-ti-ia aš-ši* (Annals, 43) and *ka-a-ti aš-ši* (*ibid.* 77) interchangeably.

† The phrase is also applied metaphorically to Yahwe himself (Ex. 14:30) to convey the sense of a solemn promise made by the Almighty.

the same phenomenon. Some of the invocations to these gods are superb, but right in the midst of them, we are surprised by utterances that carry us back to the superstitious beliefs of people to whom words as such entirely independent of their meaning, are clothed with power. In accord with this curious mixture of what might be called the old and the new, we find another striking feature in these texts, in the directions they contain for the performance of certain symbolical acts in order to further ensure the efficacy of the appeal.

The invocation or incantation by itself is insufficient. In fact, one gains the impression that at times the appeal to the gods was regarded as subsidiary to the rites to be performed on the occasion of these appeals. The address to the god or gods is introductory, while the incantation is merely the accompaniment to the symbolical rites. These rites were of various kinds. Either certain objects were presented to the god, such as honey, butter, corn, grain, meat, precious metals, ornaments or trinkets, or the suppliant presents oil with which he is anointed, incense which is to be burned in his presence, or some purely symbolical act is performed as the loosening of knots, the burning of an image or the presentation of some plant or herb possessing real or mystic medicinal power. The notion of a real sacrifice, while not absent from these rites, is not the prominent trait. The character of these sacrifices shows that though the priests derived some benefit from them, they are introduced rather from a belief that something had to be *done* by the suppliant. It would take us too long—nor is this the place—to discuss in detail the meaning of these various rites. Suffice it to say, that some of them are satisfactorily explained by Mr. King, while for others his comments pave the way for further studies in this field.

In order to properly appreciate the section of the religious literature to which the prayers published by Mr. King belong, we must bear in mind another no less important feature to which he calls attention. The prayers have passed through a process of editing. At times independent prayers have been combined together to form a group. In others, the occasions on which they are to be recited have been indicated, and the manner in which the ceremonial directions are introduced stamps the prayers as forming part of a ritual prepared for the service of the priests. The worshiper was entirely in the hands of the priest. It was the latter who led him into the presence of the deity, who told him what to do and what to say. It would appear that the invocation to the gods fell in many cases entirely to the priest; in others, where the suppliant makes the appeal, it is the priest who prescribes the words to be uttered and who legitimizes the appeal by adding his endorsement. The ceremonies connected with the prayer were performed by the priest. It was the latter who presented the offering on behalf of the suppliant, who waved the censer, who anointed the worshiper, who burned the image and who loosened the cords.

It is clear then that such a group of prayers as Mr. King has published were put together by some priest or rather body of priests to serve

as a guide or standard in the performance of the duties devolving upon them. Mr. King suggests that separate rituals may have existed for the different classes of the population, rituals in which certain patron deities of these various classes were the ones to be implored. We venture to think, however, that the supreme power wielded by the priests of Babylonia and Assyria rendered such an independent and in a measure individual development of religious thought highly improbable if not impossible. In private contracts and in affairs connected with family or communal life, the old local gods continued to enjoy a certain amount of prestige at all times, but in the official cult only the great gods in whose service stood a large and powerful body of priests were the ones to receive recognition through the standard rituals of the country. Mr. King's group of tablets furnishes us with one of these standard rituals. For the private cult, for the popular religious customs—customs that to the priests must have frequently appeared in the light of superstitions—we must turn to the so-called contract tablets, that illustrate the daily life and thoughts of the people; and even here what light they throw upon religious conditions is indirect rather than direct. It is to be remembered that those who acted as the scribes were again the priests, whose influence thus permeates all phases of life in ancient Babylonia and Assyria.

Thanks to Mr. King, a great many points connected with the religion of the Babylonians and Assyrians are made much clearer than they were before and no small number of new points are brought out by his investigations. In conclusion we would especially commend his translations as being at once accurate and cautious. He does not hesitate frequently to confess his ignorance of certain passages. This frankness increases the confidence in the many difficult passages that he *does* translate. Naturally there are some in which there is room for differences of opinion and there are a number of passages of which Mr. King has failed to catch the full force. No doubt, too, as he continues his studies, he will reach a better understanding of many passages at present unintelligible to him.

To pick out these passages and discuss them would extend this notice beyond reasonable proportions. A few examples will suffice.

No. 27, l. 14 is to be translated, "They (*i. e.*, the hostile deities) give (me) answer to a command, by disobedience." That is to say, when they are commanded by me, they reply with disobedience.

No. 1, 2, a better translation would be, "who alone giveth light," and l. 4, "who guideth aright the black-headed race."

No. 1, 41, the second ideograph is clearly synonymous in meaning with the first term—*saḥāru*. In Brünnow, No. 10,752, the sign in question equals *saḥāru*, "turn towards." Since, according to IV R. 5, 28 b (Brünnow, No. 10,754), the double ideograph as well as the single one is the equivalent of I. 2 and I. 3 of the stem 𐤳𐤠𐤏, a reading like *ašṭe'-ka* (or perhaps *ašteni'-a-ka*), "I seek thee," is to be preferred. Certainly King's translation, "I have established thee," is unwarranted and misses the point.

No. 27, 8, translate "With Sin in the heavens thou seekest out all things, *i. e.*, thou seest everything."

Occasionally, too, one should have liked to have seen more explicit discussions of the contents of the prayers. Mr. King was evidently prompted by the commendable desire not to extend his book beyond undue proportions, but one may err on the side of self-restraint.

Taken as a whole, Mr. King's work is one of the very best contributions that has as yet been made to the religious literature of the Babylonians and Assyrians. Scholars owe him thanks for the manner in which he has performed his task. His book is indispensable to those who would penetrate into the spirit of the Babylonian religion and we earnestly hope that he will continue his useful labors. Enjoying the advantage of permanent residence among the treasures of the British Museum, he is in a peculiarly favorable position for publishing texts. Thanks to him and those mentioned at the beginning of this review, we now have a clear insight into certain phases of Babylonian magic. The incantation texts and prayers are now pretty thoroughly worked up, but a great task (among others) that still remains is a systematic publication of the omen texts of the British Museum collection. Of this division of the Babylonian literature we as yet know little, nor can we gain a clear insight until the mass of tablets and fragments containing omens shall have been examined, classified and published. No doubt series and groups exist here as in other divisions of the literature. By a careful study of such a series or a group, many of the difficulties experienced in translating the few promiscuous texts hitherto published will no doubt be removed. The task is certain of bringing with it great rewards and we know of no one better qualified in every way to undertake it than the able assistant in the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities of the British Museum.

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